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SUBJECT: COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN CYPRUS

REF: STATE 155954

Classified By: CA a.i. Jane Zimmerman. Reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (S) Summary: On Cyprus, the Cyprus issue itself dominates the agenda and colors nearly every aspect of life. This includes the problem of violent extremism, which is typically charted on an ethnic Turkish-Greek axis rather than through the lens of an Islamic-Christian, East-West, or religious-secular divide. Thankfully, incidents of physical violence are few and far between. The opening of the checkpoints along the green line in April 2003 that allowed real interaction between the two communities for the first time in thirty years has further improved the environment. Still, hate speech directed against "the other" is quite common and largely socially-acceptable on both sides of the Green Line. Post has an extensive series of active programs in place to promote tolerance, reconciliation between the two communities, and the reunification of the island in a bizonal, bicomunal federation. End Summary.

¶2. (S) Post,s bicomunal efforts may have helped keep the lid on Greek Cypriot-Turkish Cypriot extremism and fostered support, especially in the Muslim north, for cooperation between the two sides. A large percentage of the Turkish Cypriot population has participated in bicomunal programs and adopted a more favorable view of cooperating with Greek Cypriots. Prior to the April 2004 referendum, Denktash, an adamant opponent of the Annan Plan, claimed publicly that his people had been brainwashed, by Fulbright to support a solution. However, the large Turkish immigrant community, approximately half of the population in the north, have, with a few possible exceptions, not been involved in post,s bicomunal efforts, largely because of the GOC,s objections. Although not viewed at present as a threat, the settlers are a large and largely unknown source of new outreach.

¶3. There is also a growing population of third-country nationals in both the north and the south, including a sizeable group of foreign students as well as laborers, and asylum seekers. Septel includes a thorough analysis of the potential dangers of political and ideological extremism associated with this population. Post has a number of programs in place that will help mitigate these risks, including intensive outreach efforts to leading universities on both sides of the green line -- particularly those like EMU in the north and Intercollege in the south, where the language of instruction in English. Our efforts to raise the profile of the problems of trafficking in persons has a direct impact on the lives of many of the third-country nationals employed in the construction and commercial sex industries. While the role of third-country nations is

potentially significant, the greatest risk from extremism is still ethnically-driven intolerance and tensions between the dominant Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. It is in this area that we are devoting the bulk of Embassy resources and where we have had our greatest success.

¶4. Approximately \$13.5 in Economic Support Funds (ESF), as well as a large portion of PAS funds are devoted each year to bicomunal programs and efforts to support a settlement of the Cyprus issue. ESF reach Cypriots through three programs: the Cyprus America Scholarship Program (CASP), the Bicomunal Support Program (BSP) and the Bicomunal Development Program (BDP). PAS organizes Embassy outreach and International Visitor Programs. All of these programs are designed to bring Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots together to promote tolerance and increase support for reunification. There is a smaller subset of projects that engage religious leaders/clerics, target non-elite segments of society, or other particularly relevant audiences. They are presented in detail paragraphs 9-24.

Post efforts at monitoring and dealing with extremism

¶5. (S) Post watches the hate website and press closely and works with government officials, educators, NGOs, and other multipliers and will continue conducting the type of programs mentioned in paras 9-24. Post reaches Muslim youth by conducting programs in the north, where more than 99 per cent of inhabitants are Muslim. New programs involve a small grant to the Inter Cultural Center of Cyprus, an NGO which promotes cooperation between the two sides. Under the grant, bicomunal teams will study tolerance, bullying, and racism in the school system. A one-year English for Specific Purposes program for 50 Turkish civil servants and journalists was designed to promote bicomunal dialogue by giving this key group the tools to communicate with the other side. Post is starting a media ethics program involving Eastern Mediterranean University in the north and Inter College in the south, which will service nearby institutions. A bicomunal group of Greek and Turkish Cypriot musicians will perform in a Daniel Pearl Tribute Concert in October with a message of promoting tolerance, peace, and cross cultural understanding.

¶6. Post has worked with the Greek and Turkish Cypriot banking systems to strengthen accountability and to prevent the illicit flows of funds. Post is also cooperating informally with the UK to help the Turkish Cypriots (T/Cs) address some of their vulnerabilities to the potential abuse of their financial system by terrorists. A U.S. money laundering/terrorist finance expert is providing informal advice on draft T/C money laundering legislation. A FinCen (Treasury) official gave an informal seminar to T/C regulators last year. Bearing Point is working with the private banks as well as regulators to improve their procedures and practices.

Host Government Efforts

¶7. (S) Within the prism of the Cyprus issue, the north has removed many books promoting hatred of the other side. This is less true for the south, which has much material demonizing the other side. Under the guise of educational reform, the Ministry of Education in the south still recently directed schools to give special emphasis to (Greek) nationalism and strengthening the historical memory of the loss and 'enslavement' of patriarchal land. On the positive side, the educational system is open to women, accepts pluralism, and open intellectual exchange outside of the Cyprus issue.

Programming Obstacles

¶8. (S) The GOC is not a big supporter of bicomunal programs. Because Cyprus functions from the top down, government

directives can weaken or destroy NGOs which promote civil society. The GOC, for example, does not recognize NGOs in the north unless they are part of international organizations. This limits the level of cooperation possible between the two sides and the number of groups which can participate in follow-up activities. The initial energy and goodwill generated by a program can disappear as the difficulty of working together from separate communities sinks in. One of the biggest challenges for program providers is designing sustainable programs that can build on previous successes. Without government support, it is not possible to recruit opponents of the Annan Plan (the 'no' voters) to participate in bicomunal discussions. On the U.S. side, the Nethercutt Amendment, which applies to FY 2005 Economic Support Funds (ESF), prohibits "assistance to the government of a country" that has not entered into an Article 98 agreement with the U.S. regarding the International Criminal Court. Without relief language referring to Cyprus, the Nethercutt Amendment will exclude GOC officials and have devastating effects on future ESF programs (SEPTTEL). Support for bicomunal activities remains strong in the north, where significant proportion of the educated public has participated in bicomunal activities. The following are relevant programs per para 5 of reftel.

Cyprus America Scholarship Program - CASP

19. (C) Bicomunal Summer Youth Camp

a. Brief Description: This two-week program aims to promote bicomunal understanding and tolerance among Cypriot youth. The program consists of bicomunal dialogue, indoor and out-door trust and team-building exercises, community work, and social activities. By breaking down cultural barriers and deeply held misconceptions, this program provides opportunities for Cypriot youth to build relationships and trust with their peers from the other community, as well as teaching and nurturing communication and leadership skills.

b. Intended Target Audience: Cypriot high school students ages 15 and 16.

c. Size of Audience: 20 Greek Cypriot students and 20 Turkish Cypriot students - equally divided between male and female.

d. How Long In Existence: 9 years

e. Assessment: The bicomunal Summer Youth Camps are the most successful bicomunal programs implemented by the Commission. Applications from interested students run into the hundreds, and each year the numbers increase slightly as the program becomes more widely known across Cyprus. This program resulted in the creation of the bicomunal youth movement known as YEP (Youth for Peace) to which hundreds of teenagers and young adults belong. Each year at least 30% of the current year's youth camps participants join YEP. Participants maintain contact with each other upon their return to Cyprus and report that this program has succeeded in promoting tolerance, understanding and communication across the green line among Cyprus, youth.

f. Suggestions for Improvement: Reports from the facilitators of the youth camp state that there were more students this year who were not willing to make efforts to get to know students from the other community; rather they were looking for a free holiday to the U.S. The Commission will select candidates more carefully and adjust the program this year in order to create a program that meets its intended goals.

10. (C) Summer Academic Term

a. Brief Description: The Summer Academic Term provides students with a first-hand experience at a U.S. university and it provides the opportunity for constant interaction between members of the two communities during their time in the U.S. Students are invited to take two undergraduate summer classes at a U.S. university while living together in a large multi-story university campus house. The program has taken place at Boston University since its inception, where there is an abundance of university student life both on campus and in the city.

b. Intended Target Audience: Cypriot university or college

level students preferably in their second or third year of studies.

c. Size of audience: 7 Greek Cypriots and 7 Turkish Cypriots

d. How Long in Existence: 2 years

e. Assessment: Initially launched as a pilot program, it was repeated this year Due to its enormous success. The participants of the 2004 program still meet regularly in Cyprus. The U.S. Ambassador invited this group twice to give presentations on their experiences; one of these meetings was for a group of U.S. congressmen at the U.S. Embassy. Most participants were also able to gain credit for the courses they took at Boston University towards their degree at their local institution.

f. Suggestions for Improvement: Extra efforts will be placed on the selection of participants after receiving reports that students found the courses at Boston University too difficult. Students, level of English is one of the problem areas. An effort will be made to select students who are serious about following the academic component of the program.

11. (C) Conflict Resolution Workshop

a. Brief Description: This five-day workshop for recipients of the Cyprus-America Scholarships seeks to equip young Greek and Turkish Cypriots with the latest practical skills and tools for dealing with conflict and managing differences in order to enable them to improve their interactions and relationships between the two communities. The Conflict Management Group (CMG) conducts this program at a conference facility in West Virginia every May.

b. Intended Target Audience: CASP students primarily senior undergraduates and graduate students.

c. Size: Approximately 26

d. How long in existence: 13 years (not consecutive)

f. Assessment: Many participants describe the program as a life-changing experience. The program provides a unique opportunity for CASP students to exchange experiences and ideas and get to know each other on neutral ground. The CMG is outstanding in its understanding of the Cyprus Problem, and in its approach in dealing with such delicate issues with CASP students. The rural location of the conference center allows dialogue and bonding between the participants.

g. Suggestions for Improvement: Efforts are ongoing as the Commission supports proposals that are up to date in their understanding of the Cyprus issues and that can handle the level of sophistication of the participants. These students are on the verge of returning to Cyprus and may soon become the next generation of Cyprus leaders. Participants need the continued opportunity to communicate in an in-depth level to promote tolerance, understanding and trust between members of the other community.

Bicommunal Support Program - BSP

12. (C) Leadership & Community Service Initiative

a. Brief Description: Under the auspices of the American University's School of International Service, this bicommunal youth leadership program works to promote civic awareness and engagement, collaborative leadership, and an appreciation of diversity among Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youth, as well as between Cypriot youth and American society through training sessions at AU and internships at U.S.-based community service institutions. Volunteer activity at a Cyprus-based community service organization is required upon completion of the program.

b. Intended target audience: Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot third year university students

c. Size: 30 (15 GCs and 15 TCs)

d. How long in existence: 3 years

e. Assessment: This program maintains the highest application rate ever for BSP, as we continue to target young leaders attending Cypriot universities. Over the past three years, BSP has worked closely with Cypriot youth participants and program implementers affiliated with the American University to create a meaningful leadership and community service initiative. In 2004-2005, the Bicommunal Team evaluating the

program shifted focus and included a Cyprus-based component to the initiative that requires all participants to carry out volunteer activities with a Cyprus-based NGO for a six-month period. During the second week of September 2005, BSP and program implementer, AMIDEAST, held a one-day workshop to assess program success, and to help participants network with local NGOs.

f. Suggestions for improvement: Efforts at improving this program focus on establishing a strong Cyprus-based follow-on component. This year, BSP will continue to work with AMIDEAST, AU, and the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot participants to create meaningful and sustainable on-island activities that help participants apply skills learned and maintain bicommunal networks and collaborations.

13. (C) Youth Summer Camps

a. Brief Description: With a view to promoting tolerance and multicultural awareness, leadership and team building skills, BSP supported two U.S.-based summer camps: Bold Leaders Summer Camp hosted by Critical Mass Leadership Education, Inc., Denver, Co., and the Pro-active Leadership camp under the auspices of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation, Amherst, MA. Activities focused on conflict transformation, cross-cultural communication, outdoor challenge activities, and structured socializing and relaxing.

b. Intended target audience: Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot high school students (15/16 year olds)

c. Size: Critical Mass Leadership: 44 (22 GCs and 22 TCs); Alliance for Conflict Transformation 32 (16 GCs and 16 TCs)

d. How long in existence: Critical Mass Leadership: 2 years; Alliance for Conflict Transformation: 1 year

e. Assessment: At follow-on meetings organized by the Embassy and AMIDEAST, campers clearly demonstrated how this program contributed in significant ways to their own personal growth as well as to their respect for diversity. Campers communicate and meet regularly. Because of the success of the Critical Mass Leadership camp in 2004, participant numbers were increased in 2005 from 30 to 44 campers and BSP decided to award a grant to another camp provider --the Alliance for Conflict Transformation.

f. Suggestions for improvement: Efforts at improving this program focus on continuing the momentum in Cyprus so that bicommunal networks based on respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding are sustained. The strengthening of youth-oriented tolerance initiatives remains a BSP priority and prospective programs and projects should continue to target youth in different and meaningful ways.

Embassy Outreach: Embassy employees visit institutions and speak on issues related to tolerance and extremism. The following is a sample from last year:

14. (C) International Terrorism

a. Brief Description: September 10, 2004 - Ambassador Klosson was the keynote speaker on "International Terrorism" during a 9/11 ceremony organized at the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia.

b. Audience: 100 Embassy wardens.

c. Assessment: The program was very effective in reminding people about the destructive effects of terrorism and U.S. efforts in combating this serious problem.

d. Improvement: The program could be enlarged to include public and private sector officials, businessmen, academics, and media representatives.

15. (C) Cyprus and the Middle East

a. Brief Description: Ambassador Klosson was the keynote speaker on "U.S. Foreign Policy in Cyprus and the Middle East." March 29, 2005 held at the Fulbright Center in the buffer zone.

b. Audience: 250 bicommunal audience from the following groups:

a) Cyprus Association of American University Graduates; b) Turkish Cypriot American Association; c) Fulbright Alumni Association;

- c. Effectiveness The program succeeded in explaining the factors that influence U.S. foreign policy formulation in Cyprus and the Middle East and efforts made by the U.S. and its allies in combating international terrorism.
- d. Improvement The program could have included more groups from the Turkish Cypriot community.

¶16. (C) U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East

- a. Brief Description: Political Officer Matthew Palmer spoke on "U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East" at the University of Cyprus on April 14, 2005
- b. Audience: 35 University of Cyprus students and faculty members.
- c. Effectiveness: The program was effective in explaining the American viewpoint on regional issues including terrorism.
- d. Improvement: The program could have been organized at a more convenient time in order to include more students and faculty members.

International Visitor Program: The following are relevant programs from last year.

¶17. (C) "Combating International Crime."

- a. Brief Description: Mr. Georgos Economou, Officer-in-Charge, Famagusta Drug Law Enforcement Unit participated in an IV program September 18-October 9, 2004. The program focused on foreign policy issues of concern to Europe and the U.S., including counter terrorism and security issues.
- b. Effectiveness: Mr. Economou returned to Cyprus with a better understanding of U.S. institutions involved in the combat of international crime. He also learned about the efforts made by international partners against cross-border criminal activities.
- c. Improvement: More Cypriot officials should be nominated for participation in similar programs.

¶18. (C) "Foreign Policy Challenges."

- a. Brief Description: Ms. Yonca Senyigit, Secretary (right hand) to the Turkish Cypriot "Prime Minister" Mehmet Ali Talat participated in an IV program February 28-March 18, 2005. The program focused on foreign policy issues of concern to Europe and the U.S., including counter terrorism and security issues.
- b. Effectiveness: Ms. Senyigit returned to Cyprus from her IV experience with increased understanding of the U.S. political system and the major domestic and international issues that influence foreign policy formulation including terrorism, defense, and international crime.
- c. Improvement The program would have been more effective if it had been bicomunal, i.e., if a Greek Cypriot official was also nominated for the same program. This would have allowed direct communication between Cypriots who can play a role in domestic and international security issues.

Cultural Programs

19 (C) "U.S. Policy Under the New Administration."

- a. Brief Description: U.S. Speaker John Sitalides, Executive Director, Western Policy Center delivered talks on "U.S. Policy Under the New Administration" February 3-4, 2005. Programs were organized in both Cypriot communities. Sitalides analyzed the domestic and international factors that influence U.S. foreign policy formulation and explained the Washington perspective on the most important international issues that cause instability in different parts of the world. He also described U.S. foreign policy in the southeastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.
- b. Audience: 200 individuals from the political, business, academic and NGOs, sectors.
- c. Effectiveness: Very high. As a result of his comments, many popular myths were dispelled about the motives behind U.S. foreign policy, specifically those areas relating to military intervention. Attendees gained a better understanding of where local issues, such as the Cyprus Problem, fit in with broader U.S. foreign policy goals.

d. Improvement More bicommunal programs should have been organized.

¶20. (C) "Playing for Peace"

a. Brief Description: The Apple Hill Chamber Players performed in concerts in public schools and other public venues in both communities February 14-17, 2005 under the theme "Playing for Peace." Music workshops were also organized for music students. The Playing for Peace project is using music as a way to further the causes of world peace and understanding.

b. Audience: 1,700 musicians and music lovers attended the performances and workshops, including younger audiences.

c. Effectiveness: The Apple Hill program exposed Cypriot audiences to American classical music and conveyed the message that music can contribute to peace and friendship rather than resentment and antagonism. It generated contacts with the local secondary education system and enabled us address Post's new priority of reaching out to younger audiences.

d. Improvement: More program days would allow post to program group in other cities and to organize more bicommunal events.

The Bicommunal Development Program (BDP)

¶21. USAID/Cyprus promotes tolerance and combats extremism through the BDP, which is implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in partnership with authorities (from the Republic of Cyprus and the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus⁸) and civil society. Projects include the preservation of Cyprus, common cultural heritage (including churches, mosques and cemeteries that have been inaccessible to their communities for decades), protection of Cyprus, shared environment and natural resources, promotion of unrestricted communication means such as the internet, and strengthening of civil society. Examples of three projects focused on countering extremism and at risk groups are described below.

¶22. (C) Education for Peace

a. Brief description: AKTI and POST, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot NGOs, respectively, conducted this pilot project to review 6th grade history and literature books. The results indicate that "school education is an organic part of the ethnic conflict in Cyprus" and that the curriculum on each side promotes fear, mistrust, and even hatred by "demonizing" the other. Recommendations focused on educational reform that would help students develop respect for ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. The results of the project were presented to the public, educational authorities and leaders on both sides of the island.

b. Intended Target Audience: Educational Authorities and Community Leaders

c. Length: 1-year

d. Assessment: Initial reactions to the results were more positive than expected. Follow up programs will include the development of supplementary teaching materials. Authorities on both sides have indicated that they must lead educational reform (including text book revision), but would welcome assistance in developing supplementary teaching materials on topics like conflict resolution in the classroom.

e. Suggestions for Improvement: An expanded approach that brings in international expertise from the U.S. and Europe.

¶23. (C) Akova, Lefka and Prosvasi Community Centers

a. Brief Description: The community centers project provides seed funding to community groups to establish and run centers for at risk community groups. Services have include language lessons (English, Greek for Turkish speakers, Turkish for Greek speakers), computer and internet lessons, basic business courses, and conflict resolution.

b. Intended Target Audience: Disempowered women and youth in rural and poor urban communities.

c. Length: Varied, over five years.

d. Assessment: Although each of the centers has encountered

unique obstacles, they have all managed to reach out to their target audience and change attitudes.

e. Suggestions for Improvement: The program could be improved with support for additional centers and more opportunities for networking both between the communities and internationally.

¶24. (C) On-island Summer Youth Camps

a. Brief Description: Local NGOs implemented eleven on-island summer youth camps focused on popular themes such as environment, culture and sports. Each camp included conflict resolution and peace building as a sub-theme. In the summer of 2005 alone, the camps reached more than 600 young people between the ages of 8 and 25. Most of the young people who participated would not have had the opportunity to participate in USG-funded youth camps in the U.S. because they would not have met the strict eligibility requirements (GPA, etc.).

b. Intended Target Audience: Youth from all walks of life, with emphasis on those in rural and disadvantaged areas.

c. Length: First year. Pilot program.

d. Assessment: By all accounts the program was successful. Formal assessment is currently in progress.

e. Suggestions for Improvement: Individual youth camps could be coordinated with one another and more opportunities could be provided for follow up activity.

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